

Chapter 23

Latvia



STUART BURNSIDE



BURNSIDE FAMILY

Around 1994, Jorgen Johansen, national director of OAC in Denmark at that time, traveled to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, where he made contact with a number of people in the Lutheran Church in Estonia and Latvia. He was able to conduct some additional visits together with other people from Denmark. Beginning in 1995, OAC Denmark sent teams of young people to Latvia and found a good base of operation in Kuldiga, the western part of Latvia. There, the Baltic Evangelistic Summer Team (BEST) was started, which consisted of a training seminar followed by evangelism outreach in various locations. Beginning in 1998, Ole Christensen served as an evangelist, partly in Denmark and partly in Latvia. In 2000, a board was formed; the aim was to start up OAC Latvia. From 2001 to 2004, Poul Nielsen and his Latvian wife, Solvita, served, and in 2005, OAC Latvia was officially established by Stuart and Ceinwen Burnside.

Following their training in Newtown,

Wales, they moved with their three children (Bethan, Shannon, and Catrin) to Riga, Latvia's capital city. In the challenging years that followed, Stuart did a good job of raising teams in several locations around the country, held training events, established a prayer network, and developed links with churches. The Burnside children also participated in ministry, using their varied gifts to present Christ through sketchboard illustrations, puppetry, and high-



BETHAN USING THE BOARD



STUART BURNSIDE TEACHING (TRANSLATED BY INESE KOMELA) AT THE ANNUAL MEETING FOR OAC TEAMS IN LATVIA

impact visual object lessons. The work in Latvia received substantial help from Sarah Ilsters of the Salvation Army, who helped establish a base and office in the center of Riga. A national committee was formed, and OAC Latvia became an autonomous nation in the OAC family.

Eventually, Martins Busmeisters and Inese Komela joined the staff. Inese brought with her considerable skills learned during her time with Child Evangelism Fellowship. Several teams were established, and a ministry called

“Superduper” also started up, which was geared to reaching families and going into orphanages. A ministry called “WOW Puppets” was used to reach children who were kindergarten age. In addition, a “Reality” team ministered in the school system, and an open-air evangelism team called “One Way” came into being. Several ministry groups were also established in other areas of Latvia. These workers consisted of the Latvia Team based in Riga, Star of Hope in north Latvia, and Revelation team in central Latvia. OAC evangelists from the UK and other countries visited to help with training and outreach, seeking to lift the profile of the ministry and equip the teams.



DAVE & SUE GLOVER



DAVE GLOVER USING THE ROPES
AND THE SKETCHBOARD

In 2009, having served as the national director for OAC Great Britain, Dave Glover and his wife, Sue, continued their OAC involvement, now in the country of Latvia. As Chairman of the Board of Directors in Latvia, Dave encouraged the growing ministry of national workers. He notes, “Serving as UK director heightened my awareness of OAC evangelism around the world. That’s why it is important to encourage travel for effective world outreach. Creative evangelism tools are relevant to all cultures. Yet, it’s more than just innovative tools; it’s a mindset. To communicate the Good News of Jesus means engaging with people in completely varied circumstances. Many of us go to schools, prisons, and ships. I’ve preached in remote African villages to full churches at midnight with the illumination of a single candle. Closer to home, I’ve taken part in sport days where I’ve spoken about my faith.” Ministering in such a variety of venues is the heartbeat of OAC as we “Present Christ by all Means Everywhere.”

In 2014, Stuart’s ministry in Latvia came to an end. He moved back to Wales, and our OAC contact then became Inese Komela, who was on staff with OAC Latvia from 2012 to 2014. She has since become a children’s worker in her local church. Several additional team members continued on in ministry with the Salvation Army, and the skills learned during their OAC years were used in a fruitful way. In recent days, Torben Ostermark of OAC Denmark has been reaching out to Latvia. In 2017, 2019, and 2022, he trained many children’s workers and some evangelists and is hoping to set up Reach the City and train more evangelists and children’s workers in the years to come.



OLE CHRISTENSEN PREACHING USING THE
SKETCHBOARD IN LATVIA



OPEN-AIR MEETING IN RIGA LED BY POUL NIELSEN



MARTINS BUSMEISTERS AND VOLUNTEERS USING BALLOONS TO ILLUSTRATE SPIRITUAL TRUTH



TORBEN IN THE TOWN OF OGRE DURING HIS 2022 VISIT



STUART USING A ROPE ILLUSTRATION



POUL NIELSEN USING A GOSPEL OBJECT LESSON WHEN DOING A DEVOTION AT A SCHOOL IN LATVIA



A LARGE GROUP OF CHILDREN'S 'WORKERS' AT THE SEMINAR IN LIEPAJA, TAUGHT BY TORBEN OSTERMARK